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----GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS.

CAMUY, P.H.

COPY OF CIRCULAR LETTER No.39.RE:GENERAL OBJECTIVES FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN
PUERTO RICO.---

To Superintendents of Schools .-

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Circular Letter No. 10 of this year's series provides that Spanish shall be used as the medium of instruction in the elementary school and that English shall be taught as a special subject. Under the new plan the time allotted to English has been increased materially; instruction in the language has been assigned to the special teachers and other proficient in English; and a program of curriculum reconstruction has been started.

Inasmuch as the new course of study will not be ready, even if in tentative form, until next year, this circular letter is intended to suggest the principles that should un-

derlie your plans of instruction in English. -

The general objective may be stated in the fallowing words:

TO GIVE PUPILS SUCH A WORKING KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH AS MAY BE JUSTIFIED BY THEIR SOCIAL AND VOCATIONAL NEEDS.

This general objective may be further analyzed into three specfic goals which are discussed below in the order of their importance.

1. -kapidity and accuracy in silent reading, and abundant reading of this nature in order that English may serve our pupils as an instrument for information and for the enjoyment of leisure.

of all the skills that may be developed in our pupils in connection with English, the ability to read silently for meaning is the one for which they will have most use. Hence, this objective is by far the most important that may be preferred for the teaching of English in Puerto Rico.

The Department is making every effort to secure reading material in the acunt amount and quality necessary for the successful achievement of this goal. There is no probability, however, that for some years to come we may be in a position to supply enough. Our present plan calls for an amount of reading matter greatly in excess of what the traditional reading matter greatly in excess of what the traditional reader can offer. For this reasons, it is dividus that the burden of creating and enriching room collections of books ne needs to be shared by the teachers. This suggestion should not convey the idea that teachers need to incur in personal disbursements, but that thru the exercise of some diligence, it is possible to get discarded books, old copies of magazm ness and daily papers, circulars of information distributed gratis, communcial catalogs, etc., that provide reading material assets as a system of exchanges between schools in the same town,

and even in neighboring towns, and collections of books log ned by the Carnegie Library will still add to the sources mentioned above. Suscription to weekly or monthly children' papers, whenever possible, is a proper device. The fact that the textbooks for geography, history, etc., which are written in English, should also be used as material for reading classes needs to be brought to the attention of teachers of English. Arrangements should be made between the teachers of English and the teachers of other subjects so that the chapters that are about to be studied from the point of view of subject content may be used beforehand by the teachers of English as exercises in reading. Caution should be taken to prevent the teachers of English from departing from the objective of teaching reading and allowing the exercise to affirt into a study of the subject matter. Such an arrange ment provides an additional spurge of reading matter and paves the way for the study of other subjects by removing the language difficulties to be met by students in their texts books.

Once the reading naterial is available motivation to arou se interest in reading and checks to insure that the reading done is abundant and fruitful are essential. An informal record of the amount of collateral reading done by each pupil can be kept without undue labor for the teacher through the organization of pupil committees. These committees might also look after the posting of graphic representations of in dividual progress in extent rapidly and quality of reading. The checks to insure the fruitfulness of the material reading take the form of short statements on slips of paper concerning each book or selection read, including title, author, succint account of the contents and the personal reaction of the child. Short true and false examinations may also be used, but they impose upon the teacher the need of reading each selection and the preparation of a large number of tests. Oral and written summarles of the plot of the stories read are a third useful way of testing. When testing is the aim, such summaries should be judged on the basis of the extent of which they measure comprehension, rather than on their correctness in form. Occasionally, summaries in Spanish may be used as tests of pure comprehension.

In order to achieve this objective extensive reading should be stressed to a greater extent than intensive reading.

A systematic effort needs to be put forth in order to in sure the adquisition of a reading vocabulary. Teachers should anticipate vocabulary difficulties when assigning reading lessons. Words nost likely to cause trouble should be explained beforehand using context similar to the one where the words a pear. In doing this teachers should steer a mid dle course between excessive help and no help at all; the former lead to habits of dependence upon the teacher and prevents the useful exercise of deciphering meaning from context, and the latter leads to discouragement and lack of interest.

The practice of encouraging pupils to make up cumulate to lists of vocabulary, to which reference can be made from time to time, is escellent. If kept in alphabetical order, these lists may be developed into individual dictionaries. Pupils should be encouraged to list not only words from the stories read, but also words from their textbooks in geography, history, etc. --

The emphasis to be placed upon silent reading should in not be interpreted to mean that exercises in oral reading are banned. They have their proper place in connection with silent reading exercises, as for example, when a specially beautiful or significant paragraph is chosen to be read aloud. Occasionally, a teacher may find justification for a full oral reading exercise.

All reading classes afford a chance for conversation and language work. In fact, a reading lesson is not comple te without an oral discussion or appreciation of the selection read. This oral exercise provides the opportunity for

drill in the reading vocabulary. -

2. The ability to use English as an instrument for written expression and communication. -

In connection with this objective, letter writing and trans lation from Spanish into English are the most practical exercises as judged by the criterion of use in our situation Letter writing shoul be motivated through an exchange of correspondence with pupils in other schools of the same town, in other towns of the island and abroad. The Junior Red Cross has for a long time sponsored correspondence with pupils abroad, and it will, upon request, submit the names of schools willing to exchange correspondence.

Exercises in translation are an excellent means of focusing attention upon the idiomatic differences between the two languages, and thus preventing the corruption of either through the use of constructions or terms peculiar to the other language. Exercises in translation may be written or oral. By placing the selection to be translated on the blace board, the class as a group may participate in oral translation.

A third form of composition which is recommended is the precis.-By precis is meant a concise summary of a selection read or heard.-This form of composition is useful in fixing the vocabulary learned through the reading lesson.-It also affords an excellent opportunity for instruction and drill

Written composition gives teachers a enstant constant check on the degree to which pupils are growing in mastery of vocabulary and control over peculair English forms of language grammar and spelling. -Remedial teaching should be both collective and individual; mistakes coomon to the class will afford material for the former, and individual errors will supply material for the latter. -The results of remedial teaching should be brought to the attention of the child through appropriate devices, and each pupils should be encuuraged to compete with his past record.

In connection with all forms of written composition tea

sidered much more important than quantity .-

3. The ability to use English as an instrument for oral con munication ..

The ability to speak English is a more complex skill than either reading orwritten composition, and of the three phases of instruction in English, the one that will be used the lead by people in our milied. For pupils about the emigrate to U nited States, however, this ability assumes a large importance wherever such pupils can be located they should be singled. Wherever such pupils can be located, they should be singled out for instruction, and major emphasis should be placed on

conversation. -

Normally, emphasis on this objective should be deferred until pupils may have acquired reasonable proficiency in reading for information and culture and in the practical phases of composition. A limited amount of instruction in oral Eng. glish, however, is indispensable in the first and second grades, for two reasons: -(a) because it is not convenient to g start reading English until the mechanics of reading in Spanish are disposed of; and (b) the pupils need a certain amount of akill in oral English in order to comment upon readings to be rade in the second and succeeding grades. -The amount of oral English required of the first and second grades should be limited to the vocabulary of the early reades and to such other expresions as may be found necessary to engaged in simple conversation about the topics read. -The second grades is generally accepted as the starting point for instruction in reading - the primer to be introduced after preliminary exercises in reading from the blackboard, flash cards, bulletin board and other common devices. -Once reading is begun, the conscious objective of teachers should be to build up a passive vocabulary useful in kore extensive reading. glish, however, is indispensable in the first and second gra-

The proper grade placement of the several phases of English instruction can be derived from the importance and di fficulty of each as described in the preceding paragraphs .-Oral English as a preparation for reading has its place in the first and second grades: reading for information and cul ture in the middle and upper grades; simple composition (le tter writing, translations, and precis writing) from the forth grade on; and conversational English in the upper stages (se

venth and eighth grades.)Language and grammar should be taught in connection with written composition and conversational English, and incidenta lly, in the reading classes. - The analysis of mistakes peculiat to Puerto Rican children should be, in a large measure, the ba

sis of language lan teaching. -The instructions and suggestions of this circular letter should take precedence over those contained in any other com munication from this office. - Superintendents should bring the contents of this letter to the attention of all teachers concerned. -Furthermore, superintendents should check individual programs of work of teachers of English to see that the distribution of time devoted to the several phases of instructions in English corresponds to the importance of the objectives as described in this letter. -- Warranti Like James. SIBAGO COCOGO PROPRIO BARRESTONES CON LO GALION COL

> Very cordially yours, (Signed) José Padin, Commissioner of Education .